

REMARKS

The claims have been editorially revised to improve consistency and expression. Claims 138-151 have been added. Accordingly, Claims 1-151 are pending.

In response to the outstanding requirements for restriction and election of species, Applicants hereby elect the invention of Group I (Claims 1-8, 17-25, 80-85, 94-115, 119-134, and 137) for examination, and Species C (Claims 8, 24, 114, 133, and 134) for prosecution on the merits. It is understood that base Claims 1, 17, 94, and 119 will be examined on the merits upon a finding of allowable subject matter in their respective dependent claims that are included in species C.

In view of the inclusion of Claim 134 in Species C, Applicants believe that Claim 115, which is similar to Claim 134 but dependent from Claim 114, should also have been included. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that Claim 115 also be examined with the claims of Species C.

New Dependent Claims 138-151 are intended to provide more comprehensive protection for certain aspects of the invention. Although not included in Species C, Applicants have presented the new claims for purposes of rejoinder upon

the allowance of their respective base claims (Claims 17 and 25).

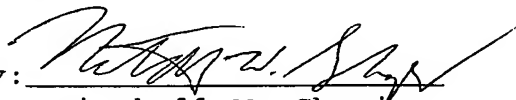
An action on the merits is respectfully solicited. Applicants note that an Information Disclosure Statement was filed in this application on or about September 29, 2004. Applicants are also preparing a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement. The Examiner is requested to return endorsed copies of Forms 1449 with the next official communication.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 and 1.17 which may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been requested separately, then such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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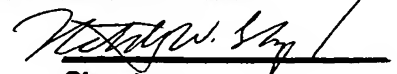
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December 13, 2004

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to the Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on the date shown below.

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